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The Two Swords:

A dialogue on the Christian conscience and the War

By

H. G. Wood

Warden of Woodbrooke Settlement

Late Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge

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Cornish Brothers Ltd

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Prefatory Note.

In this dialogue I have tried to set forth some of the conflicting considerations which in my judgment must weigh with a Christian in determining his attitude towards the war. There are on the one hand the enhanced sacredness which Christianity gives to the claim of the State, and the necessity laid upon us of expressing the law of resentment. There is on the other, the obvious discrepancy between the Christian temper and the spirit and conduct of war, together with the duty of judging ourselves before we judge others.

In the positions of Bennett and Webster in this dialogue I have endeavoured to pourtray different attempts at valuing these considerations,—attempts which leave an element of unresolved discord in each case. Those Christians are to be envied who can go to war or who can refuse to fight without misgiving or reluctance. I write rather for and of those who can only make a practical decision with difficulty.

Other points of view are represented in the dialogue only incidentally. For example, I have introduced a representative of an extreme Labour attitude, but I cannot claim to have done justice to this position or even to have attempted to do justice to it. I have used it rather to throw into relief the other attitudes of mind with which I am more particularly concerned. The political judgments expressed in the course

of the dialogue are left without evidential support. I hope they are not light or random judgments, but where they are not well-based, they may still serve to illustrate the general positions which they are intended to enforce.

The first draft of the dialogue was completed before the Military Service Acts were passed, and no attempt is made here to deal directly with the situation thus created.

H. G. WOOD.

The Two Swords:

A dialogue on the Christian conscience and the War.

They were sitting in the smoking-room after supper on Sunday evening. The party consisted of Collins and his father, and their guests, a number of men who had been up with Collins at Cambridge. Mr. Collins, père, was a good type of successful Nonconformist manufacturer, kind-hearted, and clear-headed, downright in thought and expression, tolerating no nonsense either in religion or business. Old-fashioned in some ways, he had belonged to the Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform School of Liberalism. But the war had played havoc with his traditions. In spite of a radical distrust of governments and all their ways, he had felt no hesitation about placing his engineering works at the disposal of the national administration, while his son had broken off his legal training in order to help his father in making munitions. Young

Collins had previously tried to enlist, but had been turned down for a weak heart, like his friend Edwards, who was still in the education-office chafing at the physical defect which kept him out of the firing line. Next to Edwards sat Clifford,—a handsome young Fabian with some private means, and great social enthusiasm. Before the war he had been actively engaged in Socialist propaganda, mainly in connection with the I.L.P. He continued to be busy with the task of securing the independence of the Labour Party, especially its independence from the bias of a narrow nationalism. He found it difficult to be patient with patriotism, and the broad aspect of the war as a set-back to all that he reckoned to be the interest of the common people, filled his mental horizon. The circle was completed by two other contemporaries of Collins named Bennett and Webster. Bennett was in khaki he had been invalided home from Hill 60 where he had been buried alive and extricated with difficulty. He was now expecting to rejoin his regiment and he was not likely to have many more week-ends in England for some time. He was a man of considerable power: his university career had been brilliant, and his tastes and character had made soldiering repugnant to him. But the need of his country seemed to him

to leave no option, and he had applied quite early on for a commission, and been accepted. Webster was a member of the Society of friends. He remained true to the traditions of his fathers, and he had thrown himself into the work of assisting enemy aliens.

Until Sunday night, very little had been said about the war during the week-end. Partly out of consideration for Bennett they had more or less avoided the subject. But now, when smokes and coffee had been distributed, their host Mr. Collins opened out. He had just put down the cigar-box on a copy of the Bryce Report, and turning abruptly to Webster, he said,

"Well, friend Webster, what dost thou think of the Bryce Report?"

"I haven't read it" answered Webster.

"Not read it! Every young man of military age ought to read it. It would knock your pacifist principles out of you!"

"I think, perhaps, I was afraid it might. If a little of what one reads in the papers is true, it would suffice to make one more than exasperated with the Germans. I don't want to be exasperated with them, for it would only make my job of helping the Germans in this country more difficult."

"Well, Mr. Webster, all I can say is that I

cannot understand how a strong young fellow like yourself can refuse to enlist, when you think of the women and children."

"Yes" said Edwards, chiming in at this point, "pacifism always seems to me to come to grief over the women and children. It isn't human to stand by and see women violated and children maimed or killed."

"What would you actually do, Webster," added Collins, "if you had to decide in a moment whether to protect your wife and children (Webster still a batchelor, smiled) or rather your mother and sisters from attack by a lustful war-maddened German?"

"I don't really know. I pray all the time that I may not be led into that particular temptation."

"Oh, but that's not an answer. If you admit you might have to use force, you ought to prepare to use it beforehand, and how will you escape the temptation unless you actively help to keep it from our shores?"

Before Webster could answer Collins, Clifford broke in: "I think there's an awful lot of rot talked about women and children. It reminds me of the canting stuff Alfred Austin wrote about the girls in the gold-reef city. You can always fetch men by playing on that string, but we are not

really fighting to defend women and children. That's sentiment to catch the public."

"How do you make that out?" said Edwards, who was always ready to spar with Clifford. "You don't consider the Bryce Report to be pure imagination, I suppose?"

"No, not exactly, but no one could contend that the commissioners were altogether impartial, however much they wished to be. I don't suppose they allowed enough for the provocation to which the Germans were subjected or for the natural irregularities of a big army."

"I thought the evidence for deliberate frightfulness was fairly conclusive."

"All the same, it is absurd to say we are fighting for women and children. If all we wanted was to protect our women kind there would be no need to fight. Look at Luxembourg. Have the Germans committed excesses there? You don't need to resist to escape atrocities: you escape atrocities if you don't resist."

"I believe there is something in what Clifford says," added Webster. "For a long time one difficulty in the Friends' position for me was just this question of protecting women and children. When I was reading about the Armenian massacres, and hearing of the nameless horrors committed by

the Turks, I longed to fight. I felt almost certain I should be a revolutionary if I were an Armenian. But I happened to meet a young Armenian once, one of the finest Christians I have ever met, I think. He had been through one or other of the Adana massacres and I remember when we were discussing the question of non-resistance one day, he remarked that those who accepted the precept of the Sermon on the Mount fared better than those who resisted during the massacres. He was apparently a convinced non-resistant himself, and he had been in a worse hole than Belgium."

Here Mr. Collins broke in again:

"I must say, Mr. Webster, I am very glad there are not many young men like you and Mr. Clifford. At our men's meeting this afternoon one of our members turned up who had joined the forces at the beginning of the war and had not been able to look in since August of last year. I forget his name for the moment, but he is a corporal, and has been home recovering from gas. Diabolical thing, this gas. If you are not moved by the peril of women and children, I can't understand how you can sit still when our poor fellows are being gassed like this. However, that's not the point. As I was saying, this corporal,—I think his name's Mead,—got up and said a few

words. He said so long as the chaps at home did their bit, the chaps in the trenches 'ud do theirn, and we need have no fear of Kayser Bill or the Crown Prince and their armies doing in England what they'd done in Belgium. He added, after what he'd seen (and helped to bury) out there, he must say Kayser Bill was less than a man. That's the kind of talk I like to hear. The common people, Mr. Clifford, are sizing up the facts quite rightly, and our men know quite well they are fighting for their women and children, and you won't be able to persuade them otherwise."

A slight pause followed this somewhat lengthy speech from the host, but after lighting another cigarette, Edwards resumed:

"I don't see that Luxembourg helps you much, Clifford. It's not much to the credit of the Germans to maintain a bare minimum of decency, when they are not resisted. You are not such a keen pro-German as to believe they ought to have things all their own way. And if we mean to oppose them, we've got to have sufficient force to protect our homes."

"Of course" said Clifford, "I'm not an out and out peace-man like Webster here, and I shall defend my wife when I find her like a shot and with a shot if need be. But I don't think we

are fighting to protect women, or the neutrality of Belgium for that matter."

"One thing at a time, old man," answered Edwards. "We are not talking about the neutrality of Belgium. Do you admit that we must fight the Germans and beat them to restore the recognised usages of civilised warfare?"

"No, I don't admit it. I wouldn't lift a finger to restore the recognised usages of civilised warfare There's no such thing as civilised warfare. I want to stop the whole business."

"You always were hopelessly irrelevant, Clifford. We'll stop this war and all wars at the proper time, but just now we're out to stop the Germans making beasts of themselves. Especially we have to prevent them misbehaving on our doorstep so to speak."

"I suppose" retorted Clifford, "you believe all the rot about this war being a war to end war."

The discussion seemed about to degenerate into a wrangle of a time-honoured order between Clifford and Edwards, when Collins interposed with "What do you think about all this, Bennett?"

Bennett had been lying back in a low armchair, and at times had hardly seemed to be listening to the conversation.

But on this direct appeal, he took his pipe

from his mouth and said slowly, "I think there is something in Webster's view. The Friends have a little history, haven't they, Webster, besides a great deal of principle, and if I remember aright, during the troubles in Ireland in '98 Quakers didn't resist, and didn't suffer much. I think the pacifist might be able to protect his women and children, or rather, might find them protected. But that doesn't solve the problem to my mind. It is difficult for a nation to follow two methods of defence at once, and that is what the maintenance of the pacifist position at the present time seems to me to mean. If the majority decide to use force, then not only will the few who decide not to resist find their non-resistance ineffective, but even if they do secure safety for themselves, it will comfort them but little to be unable to stand in and help their neighbours. That always seems to me the crux of pacifism. When the nation has made its decision, and is not pacifist, the minority can't really apply their principles to any purpose, and they cut themselves off from the common endeavour. I may add that if the Germans did, by any chance, succeed in invading us, I don't think that anything but armed force could now protect our women. I believe the instinctive judgment of the average Tommy is justified. So

I am prepared to concede to Webster that there is a better way, and that it has actually protected individuals, but I can't see that this better way is any longer possible to us as a people."

All look to Webster, as much as to say "What do you think of that?" and Webster said at once, "I agree that Bennett has stated a real difficulty, perhaps the real difficulty in holding the pacifist view just now. I'd like to try and tell you how I look at it, but I don't think I can do it offhand" All relapsed into silence, until Mr. Collins senior looked at his watch, and said he should go up-stairs. "I'll leave you young men to thrash things out for yourselves. For myself, I shall take my stand by the ladies."

For a time no one spoke. They all waited for Webster to begin again, but he seemed disinclined to continue. At last Clifford could wait no longer.

"No Bennett, I really can't see it. We are not fighting to defend women and children. Most Englishmen know that so long as we retain command of the sea the Germans cannot turn this island into Belgium, however much they want to do so. If that kind of recruiting appeal goes down, our people must be infernally stupid."

"Go on, old man," said Edwards, "now you've ruled out the women and children, convince us

that Belgium doesn't count."

"Oh, I don't pretend the German treatment of Belgium hasn't inflamed the public mind and induced men to enlist. But even Belgium is not our real *casus belli*. As Shaw says, Grey could not even bring himself to say positively that he would fight if Belgian neutrality were violated. We should have been in this war, Belgium or no Belgium."

"Well, Clifford, let us hear the truth, and let us know at last why we are at war."

"Its perfectly plain, dear boy, except to patriotic chuckleheads like yourself. France and ourselves have been sucked into this War by Russia."

"So you're an old-fashioned Russophobe, Clifford! I wonder a clever up-to-date Socialist like yourself should adopt the exploded prejudices of Dizzy."

"If you knew anything about Socialism, Edwards, you'd know that fear of Russia is a Marxist attitude, a point in common between the followers of the Red Flag and the dames of the Primrose League. But in any case, the fact is that we have been dragged into a sordid quarrel of Slav and Teuton in the Balkans and dragged in on the wrong side."

"Well, at least we are backing a wrong horse of another colour this time. It doesn't look to me as bad a mistake as Dizzy's."

"Do shut up a moment, Edwards, and give Clifford the floor for a bit," said Collins, "I'd like to hear him develop his thesis."

"Recall, to begin with," went on Clifford, "that Grey himself said we were not concerned with the Serbian question. So far as the rights and wrongs of that quarrel went, we were prepared to let Austria gain what she could. We thought that the Serbians would richly deserve all they would get or rather all they would lose. I remember one of the newspapers saying that if Serbia could be detached from Europe and sunk in the depths of the sea, the atmosphere would be sensibly improved. That was before the war, of course. Now this intolerant, turbulent little people with a capacity for political crime has been enrolled amongst our invariably gallant allies. I'm inclined to think the Austrians had a real case against Serbia; but at all events, it was six of one and half a dozen of the other, Russian and Austrian diplomacy, equally shady, shifty and sordid, struggling to score a point in the Balkans. It didn't matter to us which of the two scored—on general grounds, Austria for choice. Now we are fighting desperately in a quarrel as to whose issues we are supremely indifferent."

"Aren't you forgetting, Clifford, that at least

Austria and Germany took the aggressive step, and whatever we thought of the original quarrel, we had to side with Russia because her conduct in regard to it had been reasonable and patient?"

"No, Collins, I'm not so impressed with the patience of Russia. We blame the Germans for their ultimatum to Russia. We think their action hasty, but we never realise how hasty and how provocative was the Russian general mobilisation."

"Ah, but the Germans had the advantage in time. They could afford to give the Russians a week's start in mobilising."

"Could they?" answered Clifford, "I'm not convinced about this slow mobilisation of the Russians. They invaded East Prussia in force within a week of the declaration of War. That doesn't look as if they were unprepared or as if their mobilisation were an idle menace. I think the Germans had clearly good reason to distrust the military movements of the Russians, and were justified in demanding their cessation."

"Really, Clifford, you are a marvel" broke in Edwards. "You've made me realise the common sense of Shaw. I hadn't appreciated him before, but I see now how right he is in his admiration for Sazonoff. Fancy blaming Russia for being firm and prepared! They knew the sort of customer

they were dealing with, and took the right line."

"I confess I fail to follow you, Clifford," said Collins "and I don't need to take refuge in Shaw's commonsense to bring out my difficulty. Suppose we grant that Russia's mobilisation was premature and menacing, why was it necessary for Germany to present the ultimatum she did,—a simple unqualified demand for the cessation of Russia's military preparations? Surely that was unreasonable. As one of our diplomats pointed out, she might have demanded that Russia should mobilise only against Austria, if it was the menace to herself that she really feared. Better still, the demand for mobilisation might have been accompanied with an undertaking to submit the question at issue to a conference of the Powers. If Germany's ultimatum to Russia had included some clear proposal for a peaceful adjustment of the quarrel, it might have been justified. As it was, the Russian general mobilisation was deliberately made the excuse for war, though it might have been used as a handle for peace."

"Are you not adopting the popular fallacy of regarding Austria as Germany's tool, with no will of her own? How could Germany engage that Austria should accept a conference?"

"That doesn't meet my point, Clifford," answered

Collins. "If Austria is the real culprit, say so, but don't put the blame on Russia in that case."

"You know, Clifford," broke in Edwards, "your case is really hopeless. Austria and Germany were wrong from start to finish. They were wrong in claiming that the Austro-Serbian quarrel concerned no other great power, though they knew Russia could not admit disinterestedness. They were wrong in cold-shouldering Grey's conference proposals. They were wrong in the ultimatum to Russia. They were damnably wrong in the violation of the neutrality of Belgium."

Edwards stopped for breath and Bennett intervened.

"I expect we shall not seriously differ about the twelve days, for even Clifford will hardly claim that Germany and Austria were quite blameless in their last bit of diplomacy. But if you look beyond the twelve days, I think there is more to be said for Clifford's view. Have any of you read Oman's "The War and its Issues?"

Collins confessed to having read it and to having been rather mystified by it. "Do you remember" went on Bennett, "the distinction he makes between a political judgment on the diplomacy that immediately preceded the war and a historical judgment that tries to take into account the events

and policies of the last generation and more? He suggests that while we as a people can face the first with composure, we should be harder put to it to clear ourselves of blame, if our history from the Crimea onwards were subjected to examination. I confess I'm bothered by this historical judgment. I am quite sure we evade it as a nation because it is bound to make us uncomfortable."

"But why do you worry about the past" said Edwards. "When the immediate issues are so clear, why confuse them by your blessed historical judgment? It's only a pro-German device. Stick to the Belgian question and everything's plain."

"That's just my trouble. We English isolate the Belgian question as if it were the only issue involved in the war, and it is simply grotesque to regard it in this way. We flatter ourselves that we are thoroughly disinterested, and forget with discreditable ease that neither Russia nor France is fighting for Belgium. We forget also, or never try to realise that to the Germans the invasion of Belgium is and can only be a minor if regrettable incident. I don't mean that we should accept their judgment, but in justice to them we might at least remember that they conceive themselves to be fighting about what are to them much larger issues than Belgium. The fact is, the bulk of the

combatants are not struggling over Belgium at all, and these larger other issues we in England find it convenient to ignore. How can we escape the charge of hypocrisy?"

Edwards was becoming more and more restive.

"Why on earth are you in khaki, Bennett, if you believe this kind of stuff? You ought to be a pacifist along with old Webster here."

"Oh, don't let Edwards drag you into a discussion about Pacifism, Bennett" rejoined Clifford. "I love to hear you talking Pro-Germanism. It's so refreshing in this sanctimonious country of ours."

"I don't think I can satisfy either of you," Bennett continued. "I'm neither Pacifist nor Pro-German. But I think I can see the strength of the temptation to which Germany has succumbed. She was surrounded by hostile powers, and she believed both their hostility and their power to injure were growing. From the commercial side, Russia was about to denounce a treaty with Germany which had proved very favourable to the latter. France is in possession of a colonial empire out of all proportion to her population, and has consistently pursued a thoroughly selfish policy in the development of her dependencies. France had likewise broken her promises about securing the industrial and financial interests of Germany in

Morocco, and defenders of our own foreign policy have cynically endorsed the attitude of France, regarding her promises as mistakes, and extolling the shameless breaking of them as wisdom and virtue. The Morocco incident of 1911 convinced some of the best men in Germany that England and France did not mean to deal justly with her claims. She must then look after herself, strengthen her hold on the Balkans and on Asia Minor. Moreover, the Germans feel quite naturally that they are superior to the Slavs. Clifford will tell you what his Socialist friends in Germany think about Russian Government. Russia is more backward, and surely the German quite naturally thinks it is desirable that Austria should remain predominantly German and that Austria should control the Balkans. At any rate, Germany cannot look on and do nothing, while Russian intrigue uses Serbia to undermine the Austrian Empire. I think I can understand how this kind of case could appeal, and I think there is a lot to be said for it, from the German standpoint."

"By the way," said Collins, "You remember the yarn about H—— B—— at Herr Dernburg's meeting in New York?"

"No, I don't think I've heard it" answered Bennett.

"Oh, you must know it, everybody's heard it. B—— got a chance of following Dernburg at an after-dinner-speech occasion, and he said something like this. 'You say Russia was intriguing to undermine the power of Austria: granted. You say France was living for revenge: granted. You say England was jealous of your commercial success: granted. But what the hell are you doing in Belgium?"

"A very proper question, I admit," said Bennett. "And I've been doing my bit to put it with proper force in Flanders. But all the same, we must imagine how it looks to the Germans. We speak as if the invasion of Belgium were something wanton and unintelligible. In popular speech the Germans are described either as morally abandoned burglars, or as intellectually bereft madmen. They are neither the one nor the other. They are fighting for their rightful place in the world, and even for their very existence, and as many others have felt in like case, they think they must not allow a moral scruple to imperil their vital interests as a nation. This does not make the occupation of Belgium less wrong, but it does make it intelligible. The Germans can quite fairly say to us, 'You would have done the same in our place,' and our past record is not so clear that we can do more

than hope we shouldn't. As a matter of fact, largely owing to our island position, we have never had to face quite so strong a temptation."

"I don't think I yet grasp your point" said Collins. "You believe Germany to be in the wrong, but not quite so much in the wrong as we popularly suppose."

"Well," answered Bennett, "I'm sorry I've not made myself clear. I'm trying to put two things. First, I believe Germany felt that her future was imperilled, especially her economic future. As to that, I think her fears were not altogether illegitimate, and we were in part responsible for stimulating them. Our own Tariff Reform campaign was a direct menace to German trade, and was a subsidiary cause of the War. Second, though I think the violation of Belgian neutrality a crime, I cannot see that it is an abnormal or peculiarly German crime. I don't believe we have any right to regard Germany as a kind of moral leper, on a totally different plane from ourselves. It may be that in the sight of God our refusal to fulfil our treaty obligations to Armenian Christians in 1895 is a fouler sin than the violation of Belgian neutrality."

This last sentiment of Bennett's seemed to bring Edwards to the verge of explosion. Clifford, anxious to forstall him suddenly turned to Webster

with, "I say, Webster old man, wake up, you've been asleep for a month. Do say something quick, or we shall have Edwards on the splutter again. I don't see what you're to say though, for now that Bennett has shown us up as a lot of hypocrites fit for the damnation of hell, you must be jolly thankful you're a Quaker."

Webster roused himself up.

"I believe I should be more comfortable in remaining a peace-man, if I were altogether satisfied with the position Bennett has sketched. In part, I agree with him. I agree that German aggression,—for aggression it is,—is not altogether unprovoked. I admit that Germany has a grievance against us, and I don't see that we can safely ignore our responsibility. I agree that as a people we purchase our peace of mind too cheaply, and I think our self-righteousness makes us unjust to Germany and constitutes an obstacle to peace. But I can't get further than that. I won't attempt to criticise Bennett's position or Clifford's in detail, but come at once to Bennett's last point, that the German treatment of Belgium is not abnormal, or peculiarly German. I wish I could believe it, but I can't. To me the terrible thing is that it is all of a piece with the policy deliberately pursued by Germany ever since the time of Bismarck. You see, if in a

moment of desperation and simply under the stress of a great conflict, Germany had done this thing, and if it stood as an isolated wrong, so to speak, into which she had been surprised, I should have judged it differently, and I should be inclined to think that our history showed deeds as black, if not blacker. But unfortunately, it is all of a piece with Germany's previous policy. It is not an attitude she has adopted as a result of a sudden temptation, but a principle she has followed for more than a generation. At least ever since the Kaiser fraternised with Abdul Hamid at the moment when his hands were red with Armenian blood, Germany has shown that moral considerations do not count where her material interests are concerned. The appalling thing is that German thoroughness, German powers of organisation, German Ernst, in a word, have been devoted to the service of this immoral principle. God knows other nations, ourselves included, have been selfish enough and cowardly enough. But just because we lack the German virtues, the enlightened pursuit of material self-interest has not become the thing of horror in our case, which it unfortunately is, in the case of Germany."

"What a regular old Jingo you are, Webster," interposed Clifford, "I declare I wish I hadn't

disturbed you. I thought at least you'd recognise the superiority of the Teuton to the Slav. You can't really be comfortable with the Russians for allies. They haven't even got the German virtues."

"No, I'm afraid they haven't. As a people they have less education and less self-control. Their government is more corrupt and blindly autocratic, and desperately reactionary. I admit all that. If this were really a conflict between German and Russian civilisation, I'd be inclined to back the German. But the actual fact is that we have German policy at its basest conflicting with Russian influence where it is at its noblest. It is Teutonism standing for naked self-interest, opposing Slavdom, where its cause is the cause of human freedom. I think Grey was wrong to say the Serbian quarrel did not concern us. I think you, Clifford, are wrong to say it didn't matter to us whether Austria or Russia won in the Balkans. Russia's policy may be interested, and her methods may be crooked, but at least she has never regarded the Turk as her most convenient ally. She has made sacrifices to liberate the Balkan peoples: Austria never has. Russia has laboured to unite the Balkan peoples, she helped to create the Balkan League. Austria has always feared the development of independent kingdoms in the Balkans, and wrecked the League

by bringing about the second Balkan War. Austria and Germany have deliberately betrayed the Christian subjects of the Turkish Empire for the sake of economic advantages. Slavdom is a higher thing than Teutonism, at least in the Balkans. If Germany were fighting Russia to establish an autonomous Poland or Finland, it would be different. But if she does initiate any such development, it will not be the outcome of original intention. German foreign policy is a more sordid and despicable thing than Russian. The increased influence of Slavdom in the Balkans and in Asia Minor doesn't trouble me. It must spell an immediate gain for humanity. In this particular instance at least, the cause of Russia is holy : it is the cause of mankind."

"Really, Webster," Clifford began again, "you are extravagant. My German friends would tell you you look at things too much from the Armenian point of view."

"If you talk to my pater, Webster," added Collins, "you'll find the Armenians have an unsavoury reputation among business men."

Edwards found himself in agreement with Clifford at this point, for he threw in the observation that most travellers reported ill of the Armenians. "No doubt," he went on, "there's a lot to be said for the Turks. They are sportsmen and the Armenians

are low-down and underhand and possibly deserve. . . ."

"Oh, stop it," broke in Webster, very much roused. "It's caddish to vilify an enslaved and martyred people, and make their vices a defence of their oppression. The light way in which some people talk about the victims of Turkish misrule seems to me incredibly mean. At least under Russian rule the honour of Armenian women would be safe, and that would remove an unbearable horror from daily life. But I won't argue that. I can't believe that you think the Armenian question is a problem of nationality. It is just a matter of elemental humanity. There are not two sides to that question for anyone who has not sophisticated his mind and hardened his heart."

This outburst produced an uncomfortable silence, until Bennett turned the conversation back to another aspect of the subject. "Of course I agree with you, Webster, about the Armenian business: but wouldn't you admit that the advance of Russia in the Balkans constituted a danger for the economic development of the central European powers? Wouldn't you allow that Germany's fears were legitimate?"

"To be honest, Bennett, I don't believe those

fears were very deep. I know Bertrand Russell and others harp on fear as the motive of the war, and I'm all in favour of securing some international tribunal to which all controversies shall be referred before any appeal to the sword. Such a scheme of arbitration would prevent the Jingoes of all countries exploiting the element of fear. Without having that card to play, the war party would never have hustled the German people into war and left them a self-respecting people. But I also incline to think that they were not really afraid for their existence. They were afraid of some half-defined menace to their future which they were confident they could brush aside by their military might, and they were swayed by the materialistic belief that real interests can only be secured by force."

"Webster," cried out Edwards, "why on earth aren't you in khaki? I can't make you fellows out. Here's Bennett almost a Pro-German going back to France in a week, and you making Northcliffe and Blatchford look silly, and yet guying round as a Pacifist. Its too absurd."

"I don't see that Bennett's position is so puzzling" said Collins, "He thinks we haven't been fair to Germany that we have treated her shabbily over Morocco, and judge her unjustly now. But he

also thinks that she is in the wrong and that her aggression can only be resisted by force of arms. Therefore he enlists. That seems to me quite sensible."

"Do you accept Collins' interpretation, Bennett, or is your attitude rather different?" asked Edwards.

"Oh, Collins is a sound interpreter as far as he goes" answered Bennett. "I do think Germany in the wrong, and I confess to being impressed by Webster's indictment, though I still think Webster himself doesn't allow enough for our responsibility in fostering that temper in Germany. After all, she is only repeating our mistake in the Near East: mistakes of which we have never honestly repented. And we did treat her badly over Morocco in 1911 so far as I can make out. The French ignoring of a scrap of paper, and our domineering interference did much to strengthen and justify militarism in Germany. Still, I do think Germany in the wrong, and I think we had to resist her. But even if I were less convinced of that, I believe I should be in khaki anyhow. To me it doesn't seem right to stand outside the national effort at the present time. You can't sever yourself from the State. Whether you like it or not you must take part in the War unless you are prepared to leave the country. If, then, you must contribute

to the national effort, if you must pay taxes, for example—and you must or cease to be a citizen—then why not subscribe to the war-loan, why not make munitions, why not shoulder a gun? As I said before, the Pacifist cannot put his alternative into operation. His position is futile, he is really a passive fighter, and I cannot see that his position in the light of conscience is any better than that of the active belligerent. His responsibility is no less, and his share in the fighting but little less than that of the active belligerent. I loathe the fighting myself, and if you had been in Flanders you would know how unutterably revolting it is. But if it has to be done, then the citizens who loathe it are the men who ought to undertake it. Do you remember a piece in Ruskin where he says if yon are to have capital punishment, you ought to make a saint your hangman? I feel like that. Its the most sensitive who ought to go to the Front." Bennett paused a moment, and then he added. "I think I would go even further than that and put the thing on a rather different level. You will recall that much-canvassed sentence of F. H. Bradley's, 'To wish to be better than other people is already to be on the verge of immorality.' I suspect there is a real danger in dissociating one's self from the self-sacrifice and endeavour of

the mass of the people. I want to be with them in the thick of it. The aloof attitude is dangerous and to me it seems unChristlike."

The silence which followed this utterance by Bennett was broken by Edwards, who said. "I think I more or less understand old Bennett's position: but I'm still in the dark about you, Webster. Why are you a Pacifist? You believe Germany in the wrong, you must want her to be beaten, and you must appreciate Bennett's point as to the impossibility of being an out-and-out Pacifist. I can't make out why you remain a Quaker."

"Ought I to enter on an apology at this hour, Collins? Isn't it time we went to bed?" asked Webster.

"I expect Bennett ought really to be in bed: but so far as the domestics go we needn't worry about them. They won't worry about us. We can talk till the small hours if we like" answered Collins.

"I don't think we ought to let Webster off" added Bennett. "We might excuse Clifford as he hasn't any use for Quaker pacifics."

"Oh, I shouldn't dream of going to bed yet" said Clifford. "I disagree with Webster over Russia, and I expect to disagree with him over non-resistance, but I'd like to see if he can get

Edwards to understand his view. Stimulating intelligence in Edwards is....." A well-directed cushion closed the sentence.

Thus encouraged, Webster began his defence.

"The fact is, I feel awfully shaky at times about the Friends' view of war. I do want Germany to be beaten, and when I consider the case against her as I conceive it, it is all I can do to refrain from enlisting. But when I reflect quietly, I can't get away from the reasons for being a Pacifist. They are mainly two. There is first the appalling stupidity, wastefulness and injustice of war itself,—characteristics which grow from century to century, and now grow daily. If, like Solyvoff's Russian general, one caught a party of Bashi-Bazouks, red handed, I believe I should fall upon them with a clear conscience. At least, I know I should fall upon them, however I felt about it afterwards. My blood would be too hot for my peace principles. But war is very seldom like that. It is much more like the ancient vendetta in which you avenge a murdered man by slaying not the murderer, but some innocent kinsman of the murderer. How does it rectify or avenge Armenian massacres, to slay numbers of decent Turks in Gallipoli? What sort of punishment is it for the crime of the

Lusitania to desolate thousands of German homes, while the immediate agents and the responsible directors of the crime remain untouched? It is all so clumsy and irrational, this requiting wrong with wrong. So far from a good war hallowing any cause, as Nietzsche says, even a just war desecrates its cause, associates it with intolerable wrong in the minds of those whom we want to convince. Let us suppose that all our objects in this war are holy and just, yet if we succeed, our very success is likely to obscure the justice of our aims in the mind of Germany for at least a generation if not for ever."

"But surely" interjected Edwards, "Surely a clumsy kind of justice is better than none at all. You can't let things go by default."

"I am not sure" answered Webster, "whether it would not be better to let things go by default than to try and redress them by vendetta."

"Let's stick to the concrete case" said Edwards. "Surely you'll admit that we could not allow the Germans to do as they pleased in Belgium."

"Haven't they done more or less as they pleased without waiting for our permission?" put in Clifford.

"Don't confuse the issue, Clifford. The act's not over, and if you like, I'll amend my question.

We can't allow Germany to go on indefinitely doing as she pleases in Belgium, can we?"

Webster admitted that England could not honourably refrain from protest and he went on, "If it were clear that we were fighting for purely international justice and for some international system of maintaining justice, I should if possible be even more uncomfortable as a Pacifist than I am at present. But to my mind, it is precisely because our interests as well as our honour are involved and prompt our action that the attempt to represent the war as a kind of international police enterprise is such a failure."

"Do you mean to say that you do not accept the well-worn popular descriptions of our task as arresting a burglar or restraining a lunatic?" asked Collins, "To doubt this would seem like blasphemy to my father."

"On that issue I stand with Bennett" said Webster. "I confess I am sickened by the way we talk of Germany as a burglar. But the whole attitude is false. If we and our allies were really keen on securing international justice, we should be ashamed to set ourselves up as judges in our own cause. We should recognise our unfitness to judge or punish Germany. It might still be necessary to fight merely to restrain Germany.

In so far as, and so long as the war is of this character I don't dispute its justice. How long it will continue to retain this character, I can't say. That it will not remain just, if it is waged until we can achieve our professed aim, I am convinced. To me, to impose decisions in our favour in a number of questions in which our economic interests and theirs have been in conflict for years past,—and in dealing with which we have not always been fair and scrupulous—I'm sorry I've lost the thread, but what I meant was this: to impose decisions by war as a punishment of Germany, which will give us great advantages, and to impose them merely on the strength of our own judgment, seems to me hypocritical and sinful. Under cover of fighting for international justice we are aiming at securing some very solid economic advantages for ourselves and our allies."

"Surely you are too cynical, Webster" said Edwards. "We have disclaimed any desire for territorial aggrandisement."

"It is quite easy to disclaim the desire and to disclaim it honestly, while insisting on keeping the territory. We shall want to keep German colonies and territories gained in Turkey in Asia, and we shall justify our retention of them, as Sir Harry Johnston already does, on the ground that Germany

must be punished and cannot pay an indemnity. Personally I doubt if the need of punishing Germany is the real reason for our intention to keep hold of the territories in question, and if it is our real reason I think it is a bad one. We have no moral right to determine Germany's punishment. I could not fight to enable my country to inflict on Germany whatever penalty would gratify the passionate feeling roused in us by Germany's flagrant wrong-doing."

"I take it then, Webster," began Edwards, "that your position is something like this. You admit that we are in the main in the right on the war. It is a just war on the whole. But you claim that even a just war is more likely to hinder than promote justice, while the element of justice is so confused with other issues, that no man could take part in it with a clear conscience."

"Yes, I think I should accept that" said Webster.

"You think even the Belgian question does not outweigh the scruples which other issues involve in your mind?"

"No, even the Belgian question is only the chief excuse, not the dominant issue for which we are fighting."

"I confess you don't carry me with you" said Collins. "You seem to me to admit that if the

Belgian issue stood alone, it would be our duty to fight. You admit also that it is neccessary to oppose Germany's aggression by force. That is Norman Angell's position roughly. You, however, refuse to act upon it because you say you cannot fight merely to right Belgium or resist German aggression. I think it weak to refuse to fight for objects you admit deserve armed protection, because you may find yourself fighting also for objects of which you disapprove, or carrying the fighting further than you think right."

"To me" added Bennett, "there seems another weakness in your case, Webster. It is true that by fighting in Gallipoli, you cannot undo or redress Armenian massacres; but by the forcible overthrow of the Turkish government you might make repetition impossible. War may be a true preventive even though it is only a crude punishment."

Even Clifford deserted Webster on this issue "It is useless," he said, "to quarrel with the means if you approve the end. I prefer my form of Pacifism to yours, Webster, because the labour man sees that there is no real interest of the workers at stake in the war. I refuse to take part in the war, because I think the workers should hold themselves aloof from it altogether.

They are not responsible for its outbreak, and they are not concerned with its issues. Why they should allow themselves to be the instruments of the follies of diplomatists, and the rivalries of monopoly-seeking capitalists, I can't conceive."

"Unfortunately for me," answered Webster, "I cannot accept your analysis, Clifford. I don't think capitalism or diplomatic prejudice explains the war, nor do I believe the workers can or should be indifferent to its results. I almost wish I did hold your creed as it frees Pacifism from misgiving. But I admit the tremendous importance of some at least of the objects for which we are striving. I only hesitate about war as a means of securing them."

Collins reiterated his point. "Mere hesitation is not a very sound basis for Pacifism. If that is your whole case, Webster, I still think it is a weak one. But I believe you said there were two main points in your mind. What is the second?"

"I must confess" replied Webster, "I don't think my own arguments would suffice to keep me out of the firing line, though I do feel that it is more than doubtful that one would achieve any good by fighting, and more than likely that one would directly foster injustice, hypocrisy, and crime. But it is the other element in the case which dis-

ables me as a belligerent. So far as I can judge, the whole temper of Christianity is against war."

"Are you a Tolstoyan?" asked Edwards. "Do you regard Resist not Evil as a commandment to be literally obeyed? If so, do you always religiously give to beggars, and.....?"

"Hold hard, Edwards," interrupted Clifford. "Let Webster state his case before you criticise it. Your valuable comments may be irrelevant."

"I don't know whether I ought logically to accept the principles of non-resistance and indiscriminate charity, or not, but I don't think I start from them," resumed Webster. "What troubles me is that wherever one opens the New Testament, almost, one finds recommended a temper, an attitude of mind, which is the reverse of the temper we are compelled to cultivate in order to wage war effectively. In the New Testament much is said about suffering wrong, and very little about avenging it, except to remind us that vengeance belongs to God and not to us. There is much about patience and penitence and very little about the importance of prestige or of avoiding signs of weakness. Paul writes a hymn about love hoping all things and enduring all things, but no patriotic song about the duty of believing the worst of our enemies. Jesus tells us not to judge our fellows and reminds

us of the beam in our own eye, and I don't see how to reconcile this with the frenzy of self-justification which gathers round our righteous cause. It is inevitable that our preachers should return to the Old Testament; they cannot do justice to the New under the present circumstances. At its best our national temper in war is something un-Christian. I mean that when we are concentrating on the thought of our national duty and national honour, we are following a standard by which Christianity is implicitly denied. I noticed a particular example in an article in one of the monthlies by Holland Rose, deprecating a premature peace. He worked up to a climax in which he claimed for England the rôle of ancient Rome. We were to play the magnanimous part of over-throwing pride and of being generous to the conquered. He closed by applying to us Virgil's lines about the mission of Rome

Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.

As I read I could not help recalling Augustine's comment on this proud claim of Imperial Rome. It is in the opening of the City of God where he speaks of the difficulty of the apology he is setting out to make. 'For I know well,' he says 'what strong arguments are required to make the proud know the value of humility, by which men

reach an elevation not seized by human arrogance, but bestowed by God's favour, an elevation that surmounts all earthly loftiness, that totters with the movement of time. For the King, the builder of this city, whereof we are now to discourse, hath opened His mind to His people in the divine law, thus: 'God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.' Now this which is indeed only God's, the swelling pride of an ambitious mind affecteth also and loves to hear this as parcel of his praise—

Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos

To spare the lowly and strike down the proud.' It struck me as significant that Augustine should mark the contrast between that superb line of Virgil and the Christian temper, and significant also that we as a people return instinctively to the pride of Rome rather than the humility of Galilee in a crisis like the present."

"But might not a nation find itself obliged unwillingly to take up such a task?" queried Collins.

"I doubt if one nation may ever assume this attitude towards another. And I am quite convinced no Christian nation could exercise such a function even unwillingly unless it were overcome also by the consciousness of its unworthiness. Without Dostoieffsky's sense of all being responsible for all,

we ought not to administer justice. But the passages in the New Testament which warn us that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, which bid us be angry and sin not, and which condemn the unforgiving spirit while demanding an unlimited forgiveness—all these seem to point to the impossibility for a Christian nation of the rôle by which alone war even appears just or tolerable."

"Surely not an impossibility," persisted Collins. "I grant we have not achieved the ideal. We need Admiral Beatty's exhortation to humility, but after all some one must war down the proud, though he ought not to be proud of it, and besides, what else is there to do? We couldn't stand by with folded arms."

Webster got up and took one or two turns up and down the room. At last he said, "I wish I could put what I feel into words, but it is very difficult to express. I can't help believing that there must have been some other alternative open to a Christian nation, something we could have done if we had had faith. Jesus clearly rejected the use of arms in his own defence and in the furtherance of His kingdom. Evil was to be overcome in some other way. I think Seeley was right in interpreting the mission of Christ as a call to people to take

the moral offensive. Evil was to be attacked by the power of love in such a way that virtue would not need and must indeed abandon its old safeguards and defences. Christ proposed to make men ashamed of sin, not forcibly to restrain them from it. As Bennett said earlier on, it is difficult to employ two methods at once, the method of persuasion and the method of war. To abandon the former for the latter seems to me to be a denial of the faith in which Christ died."

The argument lapsed, but Collins, noticing a smile on Bennett's face asked him to account for his amusement.

"It struck me as curious while Webster was speaking, that I have found more of the temper he praises in the trenches than among the people at home. Perhaps the ordinary mortal retains most of the Christian temper by enlisting."

"If it is easier to be a Christian in the trenches" answered Webster, "perhaps it is right for some of us to try and foster this temper at home."

They were just about to break up when Edwards said. "You know, I think you take a one-sided view of the New Testament. Isn't there something in the Gospels about Jesus coming to send not peace but a sword? I heard a very strong sermon from some such text. The fellow showed that

Jesus quite anticipated wars and assumed responsibility for them. What do you make of the text, anyhow, Webster?"

"I think I know what it means," replied Webster. "When a man finds his political judgment, his patriotism, his longing to do his part as a citizen pulling him one way, and what he takes to be the meaning of the Gospel pulling him another way, he knows well enough that Jesus has brought not peace, but a sword."

"And I suppose" added Collins, "that when a man finds his sense of duty takes him to the trenches, though his political judgment and his feeling of humanity revolt against it, he too is up against a kind of sword."

"Yes," reflected Webster, "there are two swords for Christ's followers to-day, and they are more than enough."

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